THE TORTUGA PATROL:

A COMMUNITY MURAL PAINTING GROUP

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Since its inception in April 1976, the Tortuga Patrol has attempted to make art, in general, and muralism, in particular, integral and vital parts of the Watsonville community. Under the supervision and direction of two muralists from the Academia del Arte, a total of 13 Watsonville young people have actively sought to realize the goal of breaking the "visual monotony" of wall surfaces.

The Tortuga Patrol executed its first mural project in April 1976 and has since completed eight more murals. Presently, there are two different mural projects that are still in progress.

In addition to working collectively on large wall surfaces while completing these mural projects, Tortuga Patrol members have also worked on a smaller scale with canvas and last June, displayed some of their individual works at an art exhibition in Watsonville.

Currently, the Tortuga Patrol is broadening its artistic scope to include video taping. Certain Patrol members have been taping footage for a video tape dealing with college recruitment.

The two muralists referred to earlier are Ray Romo and Ralph D'Oliveira. The two began combining their artistic energies in 1975 while painting a mural at a Santa Cruz restaurant. In October of that same year, they both became staff members of the Academia del Arte.

The combination of Romo and D'Oliveira's affinity for muralism and their involvement in the Academia was the impetus which led to the creation of the Tortuga Patrol. In all

likelihood, the Tortuga Patrol would not have come into being, much less emerge as a dynamic and productive art group, had it not been for the existence of the Academia. The Academia was an agency which fostered and encouraged virtually any approach used in promoting higher visibility and accessibility of the many facets of art.

Once the mural project at the Santa Cruz restaurant was completed, Romo and D'Oliveira decided that in their next mural undertaking, they would expand and involve more persons who possessed artistic potential. Five Watsonville High School students who were employed by the Youth Employment Services Agency were recruited and the Tortuga Patrol came into being. During the following two months, eight more young people became Patrol members.

While expanding to involve additional artists in their subsequent mural projects, Romo and D'Oliveira had in mind the objective of creating a meaningful art activity which would also function as a juvenile delinquency deterrent. High school drop-outs and young people who were previously unemployed have been among those of whom the Tortuga Patrol has comprised.

Over a period of nine months, the Patrol completed eight mural projects, averaging 307 square feet per mural. Tortuga Patrol members have painted murals for a community college and two high schools as well as for a number of private and public business agencies. This group which had set out to make muralism an integral part of Watsonville has done so -- not only in that particular community, but in other areas as well, such as Aptos and San Juan Bautista. And, as the Patrol has been expanding

geographically, it has also been expanding artistically, specifically, with its current video tape project.

The Patrol's past projects and its current artistic endeavors would undoubtedly validate the group as a collection of productive and dynamic artists. Perhaps more important than the actual completion of the various art projects is the idea that the Tortuga Patrol members have been able to derive a sense of accomplishment and personal pride as a result of their involvement in these projects.

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